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Georgia Southern University Receives \$2.3 Million Grant from National Science Foundation

APRIL 30, 2009



Georgia Southern University has received a \$2.3 million National Science Foundation GK-12 grant that will benefit the University's biology graduate students as well as local high school students and teachers.

The NSF awarded the Georgia Southern University Research and Service Foundation, Inc., a \$334,833 grant, effective April 2009 through March 2010. In addition, the NSF expects to contribute approximately \$485,000 to \$495,000 annually through March 2014, bringing the total grant to \$2,298,664 over five years.

The project, entitled "New GK-12: Molecular Biology Initiative in Rural Southeast Georgia," will improve training for graduate students through outreach to local schools, where they will learn better communication skills, leadership skills and an appreciation for K-12 educational issues. Meanwhile, the high school teachers and students will benefit from additional resources for curriculum enhancements.

"Students sometimes shy away from taking science classes in school. This grant will help teachers develop an engaging curricula focused on molecular biology content that the teachers themselves will be eager to teach. The excitement the teachers show for the subject will encourage students to participate," said Dr. Bret Danilowicz, Dean of the Allen E. Paulson College of Science and Technology.

Each participating high school will select a lead teacher to team with a biology graduate student on a year-long partnership. The graduate student will be a resource for the teacher, providing information and molecular biology technical skills. The teacher will choose to implement a long-term classroom activity (e.g., a project tied to a university research program) or smaller, active-learning activities throughout the year.

The first partnerships will start this fall. During the first two years, eight schools in four school districts will be involved: Bulloch County (Statesboro High School, Southeast Bulloch High School, Portal Middle/High School, Performance Learning Center), Effingham County (Effingham County High School, South Effingham High School), Liberty County (Bradwell Institute) and Screven County (Screven County High School). As the grant progresses, the program may expand to additional schools/districts.

"It is very satisfying to facilitate a program that will have a lasting impact on so many different audiences," said biology professor Dr. Laura Regassa. "The program will provide funding for graduate students while they complete their Master of Science degree under the direction of a

faculty mentor, and the outreach component will allow students to give something back to the community. The GK-12 funding provides benefits for everyone involved faculty, graduate students, and the high school teachers and students.”

Dr. Regassa started the Molecular Biology Initiative in 2005 with funding from the NSF’s PRISM program administered through Georgia Southern University. After a year of planning, the pilot program partnered with area high school teachers for two years to bring hands-on molecular biology activities into the classrooms. More than 800 students were involved each year in Bulloch, Effingham and Screven counties. The student-learning outcomes, teacher insights, and administrative partnerships from the PRISM-funded work were used as a basis for the GK-12 grant application.

“It took an extraordinary effort by Dr. Regassa to develop the background data, the partnerships in schools and the support within the University necessary to support a grant of this magnitude. Dr. Regassa’s efforts exemplify the proud history of faculty commitment to the training of new and in-service teachers in the Allen E. Paulson College of Science and Technology,” Danilowicz said.

The Molecular Biology Initiative is coordinated by Dr. Regassa, Dr. Danilowicz, Department of Biology professor and chair Dr. Stephen Vives and Department of Teaching and Learning professor Dr. Mary Bennett. Numerous Department of Biology faculty members will be involved in the program; the department has 27 faculty members engaged in research that involves approximately 45 graduate students each year. The graduate students will be pursuing their thesis research throughout their involvement with the MBI program, so they will be well-positioned to bring their research into the classroom,” Regassa said.

Georgia Southern University, a Carnegie Doctoral/Research University, offers 116 degree programs serving nearly 18,000 students. Through eight colleges, the University offers bachelors, masters and doctoral degree programs built on more than a century of academic achievement. The University, one of Georgia’s largest, is a top choice of Georgia’s HOPE scholars and is recognized for its student-centered approach to education. Visit: www.georgiasouthern.edu.

Former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice To Speak At Georgia Southern University



APRIL 30, 2009

Former United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will speak at Georgia Southern University on Tuesday, September 8, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. The event is free and open to the public. The campus location of the event will be announced at a later date.

Rice served as United States secretary of state from January 2005 to 2009. Prior to her position as America’s chief diplomat, she served as national security advisor from January 2001 to 2005. Rice will speak on the topic of leadership.

“We believe one of the best ways to teach our students about leadership is to give them the chance to hear from people who have dealt first-hand with the pressures and rewards of leadership positions,” said Teresa Thompson, Georgia Southern University vice president of student affairs and enrollment management. “I think this is a wonderful opportunity for our students to learn from someone of Dr. Rice’s caliber. As someone who served as provost of Stanford University and then went on to become the first female African-American secretary of state, she has insight that few others can offer. I hope thousands of our students will take advantage of this tremendous opportunity.”

Rice is now the Thomas and Barbara Stephenson Senior Fellow on Public Policy at the Hoover Institution and professor of political science at Stanford University. She also serves as a member of the board of trustees of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. In addition, she is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Rice joined the Stanford University faculty as a professor of political science in 1981 and served as Stanford University’s provost from 1993 to 1999. She was a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution from 1991 to 1993 and returned to the Hoover Institution after serving as provost until 2001. As a professor, Rice won two of the highest teaching honors: the 1984 Walter J. Gores Award for Excellence in Teaching and the 1993 School of Humanities and Sciences Dean’s Award for Distinguished Teaching. Rice has also authored and coauthored several books.

Rice’s visit to Georgia Southern University is sponsored by the Office of the Vice-President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management and the Office of Student Leadership and Civic Engagement.

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